

## Resonance by EvieSmallwood

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Multi

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Dustin Henderson, Eleven, Holly Wheeler, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Karen Wheeler, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington, Ted Wheeler

**Relationships:** Eleven/Mike Wheeler, Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler, Jonathan Byers/Steve Harrington/Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington & Mike Wheeler

**Status:** Completed

**Published:** 2018-01-04

**Updated:** 2018-01-04

**Packaged:** 2022-04-03 15:14:10

**Rating:** Teen And Up Audiences

**Warnings:** No Archive Warnings Apply

**Chapters:** 1

**Words:** 4,204

**Publisher:** archiveofourown.org

**Summary:**

Even after all this time, one thing remains constant.

# Resonance

## Author's Note:

Hey guys! So, this is a promised sequel to my fic “A Heart Like Hers”. It’s not exactly necessary to read the first one, but it aids understanding as to what’s going on (and certain scenes are referenced).

I hope you enjoy!

## *Foreword:*

*Does love ever go away?*

That’s usually the question on his mind, late at night, with nothing but the moon to keep him company. He lays, sprawled against his sheets staring at the ceiling, and wonders.

*Does it ever go away?*

*Will they stay here, tucked away in my heart forever?*

Those are the thoughts that put him to sleep. His dreams are always either fitful; a kaleidoscope of a thousand colours, flashing erratically—or peaceful and calm; rippling shadows stretching across skin, fingers brushing the fabric of a shirt...

He can almost *feel* them.

But they’re not here, anymore; they’re a thousand miles away, folded against one another in their own bed, probably perfectly content.

Love might leave, but its impression resonates infinitely.

---

“What are you doing Saturday night?”

Steve looks up from his paperwork. Wheeler is watching him,

gnawing on his lower lip and bouncing on the edges of his heels.

“Organising case files, I guess,” Steve decides, setting his coffee down. “Unless there’s something else I could be doing?”

Really, he’s practically begging. He’d rather do *anything* else.

“Mom wants you to come for dinner,” Mike says, settling down on the unused desk in front of Steve. It’s been four months since Powell retired, but it *still* feels weird without him.

“Dinner, huh?” Steve pretends to think about it, silently thanking whatever entity rules over fate. “Yeah, I guess I could squeeze it in. What’re you having?”

“Italian.”

“*Fuck yes*—I mean... sounds great. What time?”

Mike is grinning, now, absently tossing a Rubix cube from hand to hand. “Like, six,” he says. “If you want to avoid small talk, that is.”

Small talk with the Wheelers really just consists of Karen asking probing questions and Ted dozing on his recliner. It’s not unbearable, but it can be uncomfortable... when *certain topics* arise...

“I’ll make it six-fifteen just to be safe,” Steve leans back in his chair and studies the kid. He hasn’t seen him around for a couple of days—any of them, really; they’ve all been busy with finals.

Mike looks okay. A little taller, if that’s even possible. He must be pushing six-two at this point. It was weird how quickly they all went from looking *at* him to *up* at him.

“So how are you? Exams go okay?”

Mike shrugs. “I’d be surprised if I even managed a B in history, but I think I did pretty good in everything else.”

Steve nods. “And your lady friend?”

“Jesus,” Mike rolls his eyes. “You know, as someone who’s like, her

honorary uncle, calling her by her name would probably be better.”

“You’re totally avoiding the subject.”

“She’s *fine*,” he says. “A little cranky, yeah... and we totally had a huge fight yesterday—but it’s completely under control.”

Steve throws his head back in exasperation. It hasn’t even been a week since their last argument. “What the *fuck* did you do this time?”

“Literally nothing! She’s... *y’know*... having her *thing*,” he bites his lip. “She’s just on edge. I was being too loud and she blew up.”

Ah. “Good news is, if you get her chocolate and something nice, you’ll be right on track,” he tells the kid, “bad news is, she’s five feet away from you, and you don’t have shit.”

It’s true; El walks into the station, scanning the desks until her gaze lands on Mike (who, for his part, pales at the sight of her).

Steve rests his head against his palms and watches as El approaches, looking more than ashamed. “Hey,” she says, playing with her keys.

Mike swallows. “Hey.”

“You two are unbearable,” Steve observes, after another moment of awkward silence. “El, Mike is sorry for being a douche. Mike, El is sorry for yelling. There. All better.”

El throws him a look. It’s a mix of irritation and gratitude. Then she sits down next to Mike and takes his hand. “I really am sorry.”

Mike gives her a small smile (*God*, Steve doesn’t know whether to be jealous or grossed out). “It’s okay. I’m sorry, too.”

“So,” Steve somehow manages to make them jump, even though it’s literally *his* workplace establishment, and they’re sitting in front of *his* desk. “You coming to the dinner on Friday?”

“Saturday,” Mike corrects.

“Right.”

El nods. "I'm making cookies."

Steve grins. "See? This is why we keep you around."

"You're awful," Mike says, point blank.

Steve grins, feeling perfectly content. Yeah, so his life mainly revolves around a bunch of teenagers—but they're his kids. He's perfectly content with where he's at.

Until Saturday, that is.

---

He shows up with a bottle of pinot noir in hand, and a bouquet of flowers for Karen. These dinners have become a sort of monthly tradition—the Wheelers, the Hoppers, and Steve getting together to catch up. At first, Steve had only really been present as an ice breaker. Now, he's pretty confident that he's part of the Hopper package. Working with one and hanging around the other constantly sort of does that.

Karen greets him with a bright smile, pressing a glossy kiss to his cheek. She then takes the roses and the wine and sets them aside, and Steve remembers (stupidly late) that she's actually been making an effort to not drink as much lately.

Fucking sales clerk.

"So, how are things?"

Steve shrugs as he peels off his gloves and coat. "They're okay. A little busy, y'know, but not too bad."

"Well, that's good. Things are always hectic this time of year. I'm glad you're not too bogged down."

"A wise woman once told me to do all my Christmas shopping in October."

Karen gives a tittering laugh. God, is it weird to have the mother of his ex fawning on him. Not that she really *means* anything by it. "Well, you know," she leads him into the house, "my mother told me,

and I've always done it that way—”

Steve stops so short he almost bumps into her.

There's no air in his lungs. He takes them in—sweaters and flushed cheeks and faltering smiles. It feels like an eternity before he even *breathes* again.

“Hey, Steve.”

Same old Nancy Wheeler, voice like a summer fucking breeze, eyes alight with a ridiculous hope.

He swallows, very hard. It takes everything not to run out of the damn house. It's been three years since he's really seen them; sure, he's caught the occasional glimpse during past Decembers, but that's... that's it. No contact. No phone calls.

Nancy's hair is longer. It looks the way it used to, when they first met, but still as curly as before. It's glowing golden at the ends in the dim light. She's breathtaking, of course, and his heart is practically ripping its way out of his chest.

“I-I didn't think they were coming home this year,” Karen says to him, voice low. “I didn't think you would mind, I'm—”

“No, it's fine,” Steve manages to shoot her a shaky smile, which he keeps on his face long enough to send Nancy's way. “Uh, hey.”

It's not fine. He feels like he's dying—and it doesn't help when Jonathan brings attention to himself by clearing his throat.

He looks the same as always; tousled hair, dark eyes (they used to be so full of secrets, and then those shutters had been opened to Steve and he had seen all of those beautiful things that were so well-hidden, seen the way they lit up when he laughed and the way they crinkled at the corners when he grinned—), hands tucked into pockets...

The love never left, Steve is sure of that now. It was just shoved down and buried, and now it's been grabbed and carefully extracted.

“Well! Dinner is ready, so,” Karen gestures to the dining table. Ted is already sitting, obscured behind a newspaper (it must be nice to be oblivious).

“Uh,” Steve rips his gaze away from the two of them, watching them quietly whisper something to one another, hunched over and warm and perfect and— “I’ll go get Mike.”

“Thank you, sweetie,” Karen squeezes his hand and then goes to the kitchen to retrieve the food. Steve doesn’t look again before rushing down the basement steps.

Of *course* they’re making out.

“Michael!”

Mike jumps, ripping himself away from El. Their cheeks are red and their hair is ridiculously messed up. “It’s not what it looks like,” he says, grinning when he realises it’s only Steve, and laughing when El carelessly pulls him down for more.

“You do realise your dad is gonna be here in like,” he glances at his watch, “five minutes, right?”

It makes them both groan. El flips him the finger, face buried in Mike’s neck. Mike is trying to gently detangle himself. “We’ll be up in a minute,” he promises, still grinning.

It’s good, Steve decides. They’re happy. It’s one good thing in a sea of fucked, he thinks, ascending the rickety basement steps (behind him is the sound of Mike literally *rolling* off of El and landing on the floor with a thud).

He stops before opening the door, hand holding onto the cool brass knob. He leans his forehead against the wood, and sucks in a deep breath.

*It’ll be okay*, she’d said to him, the night before they left.

But it wasn’t. It wouldn’t be.

---

It's ridiculously silent until Hopper arrives. The only sounds are the clatter of cutlery against plates and the occasional page-turn of Ted's newspaper.

Then Hopper is slipping through the unlocked door and peeling off his coat. "Hey, sorry I'm late."

He doesn't really look sorry. Last Steve had seen him, he'd been stalling by filling out forms at a ridiculously slow pace.

"That's okay," Karen smiles. "We started without you, I hope you don't mind."

Hopper waves her off. "As long as there's still food, I'm fine."

Karen passes him an already made up plate. Hopper sits into his designated spot beside Steve, who's next to El.

"Why were you late?" pipes up Holly, over a glass of too much juice. "Homicide?"

Karen's eyes widen. "Holly!"

Hop is grinning, though. "No, nothing like that," he says. "Just reports."

"Did you finish checking Callahan's on that domestic dispute?"

Hopper nods, sprinkling extra pepper over his noodles. "Twelve damn years on the job and he still can't use a semicolon right."

Steve can't help but laugh, even though it's really not funny when *he's* the one correcting a report. The shit is enough to give anyone a headache.

"So, Hopper," Jonathan finally speaks, for the first time that night (it makes Steve's heart skip a beat, which he tries his best to ignore), "how's my mom?"

Hopper pauses with a forkful of food midway to his mouth. "Shouldn't you know?"



“That’s not what it seemed like when I saw her leaving the house this morning,” El says dryly.

Mike chokes on his drink, and it quickly turns into laughter. Hopper glowers at him. “Watch it, kid.”

“Yes sir, sorry sir,” he says, not looking sorry at all.

“Alright, alright, lay off the man,” Steve defends, looking absolutely anywhere but them, “he’s finally found a love that heals his blackened heart—”

“Stop now or kiss your job goodbye, Harrington,” Hopper warns.

Steve tuts. “Then who would get the work done?”

It goes on like that; Steve finding comfort in the familiarity of the people around him, trying his best not to look at Nancy or Jonathan, not to talk to them—and Christ, is it *difficult*. Every time one of them speaks, his automatic reaction is to look up and listen, to marvel at how they’ve changed, or grasp tightly onto something he recognises.

Halfway through dessert, Dustin bursts through the front door. Steve watches as he runs up and wonders when his life became a sitcom.

“Mike,” he’s panting, nearly keeling over, “I need... I need the chemistry notes...”

There’s a collective release of tension among most of the people at the table. Steve releases his grip on the tablecloth, sighing through his nose.

“They’re on the table in the basement,” Mike says, sounding as exasperated as they all feel.

“Thanks, man—wait, what is *this*?! Are you all *socialising* over tiramisu?! *Without* me?”

“You said you had studying to do,” Mike reminds him.

“I can put off studying for cake, Mike,” Dustin snaps. “*God*—Nancy! Hey! How are ya?”

He leans against a chair and flashes her a grin. Steve can't help but glance over. He catches her small smile, and watches as she winks. "Hey, Henderson."

"How's junior year treating you? Decided on a major—"

"*Dustin*," Mike snaps, "just go get the notes!"

Dustin rolls his eyes. "Fine. But I want in on whatever fancy social club this is, next time."

"It's not fancy," Mike argues. "*Steve* is here."

Steve flicks a bit of his whipped cream at Mike. "Watch yourself, dipshit."

Mike seems unbothered. He throws Steve a grin before going back to his dessert as Dustin heads downstairs. Steve finds his appetite has diminished entirely, though.

"I... I think I'm gonna go," he says, maybe a little abruptly. "Gotta feed the cat, and all that."

Karen stands. "Can I get you any leftovers, or—"

"No, that's fine," Steve waves her off. "Really, I'm just beat. I'll see you guys around."

"I-okay—"

He's out the door before she can say much else, still struggling with his coat and breathing hard. It's all too much. He can still feel her lips against his neck and Jon's words, muffled, from being pressed against Steve's side. Solid, there, *together*.

Impressions.

---

"We fucked up."

Jonathan looks up, taking in her worried face. Nancy settles down

beside him on her bed. It's just how she remembers it—rickety, iron, and a little lumpy. It's nothing like the one they have in New York.

Being in this house is like travelling back in time. She feels seventeen, tucked away in her room with her boyfriend, whispering about Steve. About how much... how much she misses him.

"I think it's good," Jonathan says, setting his camera aside. "We followed through with the plan, and yeah, he bolted..."

"He wasn't *supposed* to bolt," she snaps, but she's more anxious than irritated. "He was supposed to stay, and you were supposed to suggest we get drunk, and then—" she slumps back, flopping against her pillows. "I can't believe he left."

"Well, we could always go to his place," Jonathan lays down next to her, warm and present and perfect. "Steal the wine he brought, or something."

"We don't know where he lives," Nancy reminds him, easily snuggling against his side. "And it's cold outside, and—"

"And you're making excuses," Jonathan finishes for her.

Nancy pulls back and glares at him, even if he's right. She hates that he's right. Why is she so afraid?

It hadn't been *nearly* this terrifying the first time around.

*(Maybe, her mind whispers, it's because the first time was your second chance, and he's been left in the dirt enough by you to know you're not good enough for him.)*

"Your mom *definitely* knows where he lives," Jonathan reasons. "Ten bucks says she brings him a casserole once a week."

Nancy rolls her eyes, even though he's definitely right about that, too.

She purses her lips. "I feel like we missed out on so much," she says, after a minute. It's something that's been bothering her all night—ever since she'd seen how Mike had gotten, and how Holly had

developed her own weird persona, and how *familiar* they all were with one another. “I forgot how to... how to be in the party, you know?”

She can’t believe she’s using nerd terminology to describe her emotions. But it works, because Jonathan nods in understanding.

“I need to go home tomorrow.”

She knows what he means by that. He hadn’t been able to tonight; Joyce is working a double and Will had plans to study with some boy none of them know—he’s spending the night, which leaves a nagging feeling in Nancy’s stomach. She *knows* what that’s about. She just hopes he’s being safe.

“You will.” Nancy reaches out and takes his hand, squeezing it.

“But for now,” Jonathan goes on, staring down at their intertwined fingers, “I’m really, *really* interested in meeting Steve’s cat.”

It makes her laugh, which is really all she needs just then. But suddenly Jonathan is slipping off the bed and leaving her room.

“Oh—you meant *right now*,” she bites her lip, soaks in the comfort and familiarity of her room, and then goes after him.

When she gets downstairs, her mom is already writing down Steve’s address on a piece of paper.

“I just want to make sure he’s okay,” Jonathan is explaining, hands tucked into his pockets. “He left pretty quick, y’know?”

Her mom nods. “Call me if anything’s wrong,” she requests, handing over the address.

Jonathan pockets it. “Yeah, absolutely. Thanks.”

---

The drive to his place is consumed in silence. Nancy watches the snow fall through the windshield, and realises as they get closer that she doesn’t really know where they are.

Sure, she grew up in Hawkins, but she spent most of her time in the town itself or her neighbourhood.

Steve's house is tucked away, near a few others but not quite next door. It's brick, homely, and... not what she expected.

Jonathan glances at her, but she's too busy taking in the police cruiser in the driveway, and the lone garden gnome sitting in the middle of the lawn.

"You ready?"

"Yeah," she realises how breathless she is and takes a minute. "Yeah, I'm ready."

They get out of the car and begin to walk up the drive, but Nancy halts about halfway up. "What if he's asleep?"

"We'll leave, I guess."

"Oh." She nods, joining him on the porch.

He's about to knock, so she grabs his hand. "What if he hates us?"

*We ruined it. We left and let it fall apart.*

"Then..." Jonathan, for the first time, actually looks afraid. "I guess we just... try."

"Right."

The doorbell is rung. Within seconds, the light in the front room is flicked on. Nancy waits with baited breath, hands balled in her coat pockets, gnawing on her lip.

*Fuck fuck fuck fuck*

"Is everything okay?"

Those are the first words out of Steve's mouth. He's standing in his doorway with his messed up hair, wearing a t-shirt and boxers, squinting at them through the dark.

They'd woken him up. *Shit.*

"Yeah," she blurts, when Jonathan doesn't say anything. "Yeah, um... we just..."

"Wanted to talk," Jon finishes.

It sounds lame. They're idiots. They shouldn't have done this.

Steve studies them for another second before stepping aside. "Mi casa es tu casa," he intones.

It's not horrible, really; it just feels so bare. There's a couch against the wall, and a TV on the floor sans a stand. She thinks there might be an Atari hooked up to it—probably for the kids to use when they come over.

Aside from that, there's not much to see.

"Homely," Jonathan comments.

"Yeah, well," Steve shrugs. "I spent like, half of what I make on the shitheads, so..."

Nancy raises her eyebrows.

"I'm not being *literal*," he closes the front door.

There's a small moment of silence as they take one another in. "We brought wine," Jonathan says, eventually. Nancy hopes it isn't the same bottle Steve brought over before.

He only smirks, though. "So it's *that* kind of talk," he slips past them, into the kitchen, where he retrieves some cups. "I knew it was coming."

Nancy takes the mug he offers her. "H-How are you? How's the job?"

"Same old, same old," Steve settles onto the couch and then pats the seat beside him. Jonathan is quicker than her.

Nancy knocks back some of the drink and then settles on the floor

across from them, legs folded.

Steve studies her. It feels almost magnetic. She can almost *sense* the hunger beneath his facade of indifference.

*(expose the truth)*

Then Jonathan starts talking. “New York is good,” he says, even though no one asked. “The program is amazing, and there’s this really cool guy who offered to mentor me next semester.”

“Are you gonna take him up on it?”

Jon shrugs. “I don’t know. I’ve been considering it—I’ve just heard a lot about his methods, and he doesn’t seem like the most flexible guy—and photography is a super flexible art. I need to be learning every technique I can, not just... one set process.”

Steve nods. “Go with your instinct, man.”

She doesn’t know what does it, but suddenly she snaps. “Okay, screw it,” Nancy downs the rest of her wine and wipes her mouth. “I’m just gonna say it: we fucked up. Really bad. And... there are really no excuses. I was just scared. I didn’t want to... to feel you slip away. So I just stopped. And I know how *awful* that is, I *do*, but all I wanna do is fix it.”

Steve stares at her for a long moment, before slipping down onto the floor with her. “I’m not mad,” he says.

*“Bullshit.”*

“No, really, I’m not,” he takes the empty mug and sets it aside before grabbing her hands. “I was, sure. But now I’m...”

“Please don’t say ‘okay’,” Nancy begs. She can’t handle it if he’s... if there’s no chance. “I mean—that sounds *horrible*—I just... I’m not.”

“Neither am I,” Jon adds, looking suddenly very worn. He glares out the window, which means he’s fighting tears.

She’s already succumbed to them, letting them get sucked down by

gravity, onto Steve's warm hands.

"I was gonna say, I'm a nervous wreck," Steve looks between them, and then down at the carpet. "I get why... what happened happened. Really, I do—"

"But it wasn't *okay*," Nancy scoots closer, trying to get him to understand. "I miss you all the time."

Steve is speechless for a minute or so. She can see the emotions clouding his face. He's like a storm, lit by flashes of lightning and darkened by masses of hurt.

"I miss you too."

It's like someone's thrown her a rope. Nancy can't help but grasp onto it with all of her might, and just pull.

And so, cheeks hot with nerve, she wraps grabs him by his shirt and pulls him close, giving him just enough time to back out before she kisses him.

It's like riding a bicycle for the first time in years. His lips feel the same, and his hands find home on her hips. Her own rake through his hair, which is just as soft as it was before.

Everything about him is soft. She feels like she's floating, even with the rawness of his kiss. It's hungry, and passionate, driven with a hot intensity after years of going without.

*Steve.*

She's practically in his lap by the time he pulls away. His pupils are blown. He's looking at her like she's the only thing on Earth—just like he had when she was fifteen, and they'd kissed for the first time under the school bleachers. He was her first kiss. Her first love.

"Christ."

"Yeah."

Her heart is pounding so fast she knows he must feel it. Nancy adjusts



so that she's perfectly in his lap, and then looks at Jonathan.

"You know," he says, mock testily, "we *had* a plan."

"Fuck plans."

"You guys had a plan?"

Nancy meets his eyes again. "A small one," she admits. "Get drunk and talk about feelings. I'm the only drunk one, though."

Steve grins. "You're an *idiot*, Nancy Wheeler."

"You know, I can't believe you guys made me sweat through my fucking shirt for nothing," Jonathan snaps suddenly, dropping to the floor beside them. "There I was, ready to like, fight, or proclaim my love, or *whatever*—and you just start making out. It's disgusting. I'm disgusted."

"God, I missed you," Steve mutters, looking almost amazed. "Where the *hell* have you been?"

"Convincing myself I could function without you, seven hundred miles away."

Nancy manages to clamber out of his lap, but still stays close. She keeps her hand in his, even after he starts kissing Jonathan. Everything feels complete, just then. It feels *right*.

Just like it had, all those nights ago, in the pool. She'd been shivering and wet and so had they, but it had been good.

Jonathan draws away from Steve, but then he's burying his face in Steve's neck.

"Did you really sweat through your shirt? 'Cuz you can take it off, if you want."

Jonathan looks up with red cheeks and a smirk. "That's the stupidest thing you've ever said in your whole life."

Steve shrugs. "I thought I'd try it."

This is how it's supposed to be. How it always should have been. She feels so ridiculously content, here with them. It's like no time passed at all.

"I love you both," she says.

They look at her, and then at each other. Before she knows it, they're both tackling her and pressing kisses on her face and neck, while she laughs between each one.

It's *perfect*.

### **Author's Note:**

Thank you for reading!! I'm sorry if anyone seems out of character, it's been a while since I've seen the show (which needs to change tbh). I feel like it's impacting my ability to get into their headspaces a bit. BUT, keep in mind they have aged a little, and so naturally they won't be the same people they were before.

Sometimes out of touch can be a good thing, lol.